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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: DOMINICAN ELECTION SERIES #2: PRD AND PRSC --
STRETCHING UNTIL THEY BREAK

1. Following is the second in Embassy Santo Domingo's series on the 2004 presidential elections:

(begin text)

PRD and PRSC - - STRETCHING UNTIL THEY BREAK

(Meetings sponsored over the weekend by rivals in the parties provided the spectacle of splits and the prospect of breakdown.)

Rival groups in the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) convened their competing versions of the PRD National Executive Committee (CEN) on November 15, with sharply contrasting outcomes. Following his November 13 "open letter" to President arguing against a re-election effort, CEN chair Hugo Tolentino Dipp declined to attend either event.

The PRD CEN meeting at the Hotel Embajador presided by Secretary of Culture Tony Raful endorsed proposals negotiated

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between the "Project for Hipolito" (PPH) and three PRD rivals to keep open the lists for presidential nominations until November 30, to select the winner on a "50 percent plus one vote" basis, and to confirm the results a week after the vote. They selected Peggy Cabral, widow of the PRD's charismatic leader Jose Francisco Pena Gomez, to organize a convention on December 14. Featured participants along with President Mejia's campaign manager Secretary of Agriculture Eligio Jaquez were three cooperating rivals for the nomination - Vice President Milagros Ortiz Bosch, Rafael Subervi, and Emmanuel Esquea. The 550 members of this 832-member CEN were two hours late in starting their event but made up for it with their enthusiasm. They elected a full list of party officials and confirmed session president Secretary of Culture Tony Raful as President of the PRD.

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At the same time, across town at the offices of the Socialist International, a meeting of 1071 members of the other, rival PRD National Executive Committee of 1300 faithful was chaired by PRD President Hatuey Decamps, fierce opponent of "continuism" in presidential politics. Decamps announced that he would not, after all, have to carry out his published intention to suspend Tony Raful from the post of acting PRD president, since Raful had provided a letter of resignation that same day. In fact, this version of the PRD CEN chose the absent Raful to serve as vice president of the party. They elected a full list of party officials and gave Hatuey Decamps the authority to fill any vacancy and to set the date of a national convention (on November 18 he designated December 7, with confirmation of the results on December 14; the Political Committee of the Hatuey rump congress voted to bar the President from registering a candidacy for re-election).

While the PRD constituted itself formally into two rival organizations, the Reformist Social Christian Party (PRSC) was moving rapidly in the same direction. On November 13 the PRSC Executive Council formally suspended former presidential candidate Jacinto Peynado and two senior supporters for failing to respect party discipline. Peynado's group had adamantly insisted on far-reaching changes in party leadership and insisted on overturning the March 2003 party selection of Eduardo Estrella as the PRSC presidential candidate. They claim that Mejia's PPH tampered in that election, throwing it to Estrella with the intent of weakening the party. Peynado and supporters formally appealed their suspensions to the National Elections Board.

Peynado was in Miami for medical treatment, but his son, the previously suspended supporters and PRSC members said to constitute two-thirds of the membership of the National Executive Committee met on Sunday, November 16, at the San Carlos Club. They voted to expel from office PRSC President Rafael Bello Andino and several other senior officials but named no replacements for them. Sitting as observers at the pro-Peynado conclave were notables from the PRD, the PLD and lesser parties. A third PRSC aspirant to leadership, Francisco "Quique" Atun, was not present but has managed to

keep up cordial contacts with both groups.

Leonel Fernandez of the PLD made a point of scheduling a successful political rally the same weekend with the "Somos Mas" faction of his party, which served previously as the party campaign vehicle for his rival Jaime David Fernandez Mirabal. His message: "Those who cannot govern themselves are in no condition to govern the country."

(end text)

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